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Data and Code for: Product Innovation, Product Diversification, and Firm Growth: Evidence from Japan's Early Industrialization

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Project Description

Summary: ?

We explore how firms grow by adding products. We leverage detailed data from Japan's cotton spinning industry at the turn of the last century to do so. This setting allows us to fully characterize the type of differentiation (vertical or horizontal) of new product introductions as well as whether the product is within or outside of the firm's prior technological capabilities. We find that trying to introduce innovative products beyond the firm's previous technologically feasible set, even if such trials fail, is a key to firm growth. Indeed, it mostly facilitates growth through the firm's later success in horizontal product diversification. In long-term outcomes, the right tail of the firm size distribution becomes dominated by firms first moved into technologically challenging products and then later applied their newly acquired technical competence to horizontal expansion of their product portfolios. Two mechanisms through which this knowledge transfer occurs are greater production system flexibility and higher product appeal to downstream buyers.

Funding Sources: ? National Science Foundation (1632833); Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (15K03409); Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (15KK0078); Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (190H00587); Osaka University (Japan)

Scope of Project

Subject Terms: ? innovation; growth; product variety choice; industrialization; Japan; technology choice; product innovation; product diversification

JEL Classification: ?

D20 Production and Organizations: General

L00 Industrial Organization: General

N80 Micro-Business History: General, International, or Comparative

O30 Innovation; Research and Development; Technological Change; Intellectual Property Rights: General

Geographic Coverage: ? Japan

Time Period(s): ? 1893 – 1914

Universe: ? Cotton spinning industry firms operating in Japan between 1893-1914

Related Publications

The following publications are supplemented by the data in this project.

- Braguinsky, Serguey, Atsushi Ohyama, Tetsuji Okazaki, and Chad Syverson. "Product Innovation, Product Diversification, and Firm Growth: Evidence from Japan's Early Industrialization." *American Economic Review* 111, no. 12 (December 2021): 3795–3826. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20201656>.

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